



A resource from the God's **Grand** Story Series

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT



GROUP OR INDIVIDUAL
BIBLE STUDY

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

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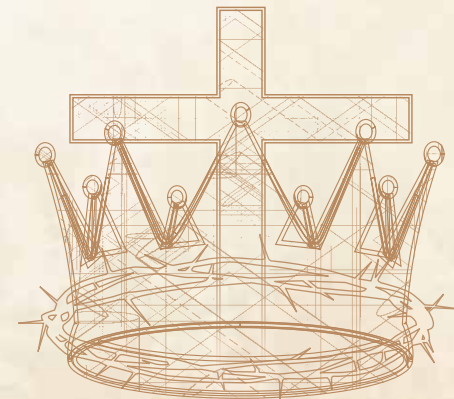
How to use the *Jesus in the Old Testament* Guidebook

For the next six weeks, you'll be going on an adventure through the Old Testament, learning how the stories of creation and fall, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Joseph, the wilderness wanderings and the tabernacle, the captivity and more ... all point to Jesus. Here's how to get the most out of your experience:

If you're working through this study on your own, watch each video session with Phil and then read the pages titled **Your Quiet Time**. These short daily lessons introduce the week's teaching and help you better understand God's Word. The **Reflection** questions encourage you to internalize God's truth. The **Bottom Line** section provides a concise summary of what you've read. The **Pray** section prompts you to talk to God about how what you've read intersects with your everyday life.

If you're studying *Jesus in the Old Testament* with your small group or Sunday school class, read the pages titled **Your Quiet Time**. Then watch the video session together and work through the **Reflection** questions that accompany each session of *Jesus in the Old Testament*. As you do, you'll see the beauty and wonder of creation as well as the world's brokenness and pain ... and how it all points to our Savior, Jesus. You'll meet Melchizedek and Joseph, Moses and Elijah ... and how their stories foreshadow Christ. You'll learn about God's holy character and His compassionate heart ... and how His story culminates in Jesus, His Son. This is a great opportunity to both share with and learn from others.

Our prayer is that this six-week experience will have a long-term impact in your life. We want you to understand what God's Grand Story means to you personally as you fall deeper in love with God and His Word.





We've seen it in the lives of people all over the world. When people encounter the living God in His Word, everything changes. Eyes are opened. Hungry hearts are filled with truth. Lives are transformed. Families are reconciled. Entire communities are challenged to see the world through a different lens—the lens of Scripture.

When people have the tools to understand and apply the practical truths of the Bible to their lives, nothing stays the same. But for many Bible readers, obstacles stand in the way of life transformation: apathy; confusion; persecution from family, friends, or a closed government; an absence of resources; few training opportunities for pastors and Bible teachers. From “The Bible is old and irrelevant” to “I don't know where to start,” from “I can't even own a Bible” to “I've never been taught the Bible,” from “I don't understand the Bible” to “I don't have time to read the Bible,” and so much more, we help people everywhere live God's Word ... and understand it.

That's why we exist.

Since 1976, Walk Thru the Bible has helped people overcome obstacles to knowing and living God's Word. Our innovative live events and high-quality biblical resources inspire passion and advance biblical literacy in 130 countries around the world. By following the 2 Timothy 2:2 model of equipping teachers to teach others, we will reach and impact more than two million people through our events and biblical resources this year.

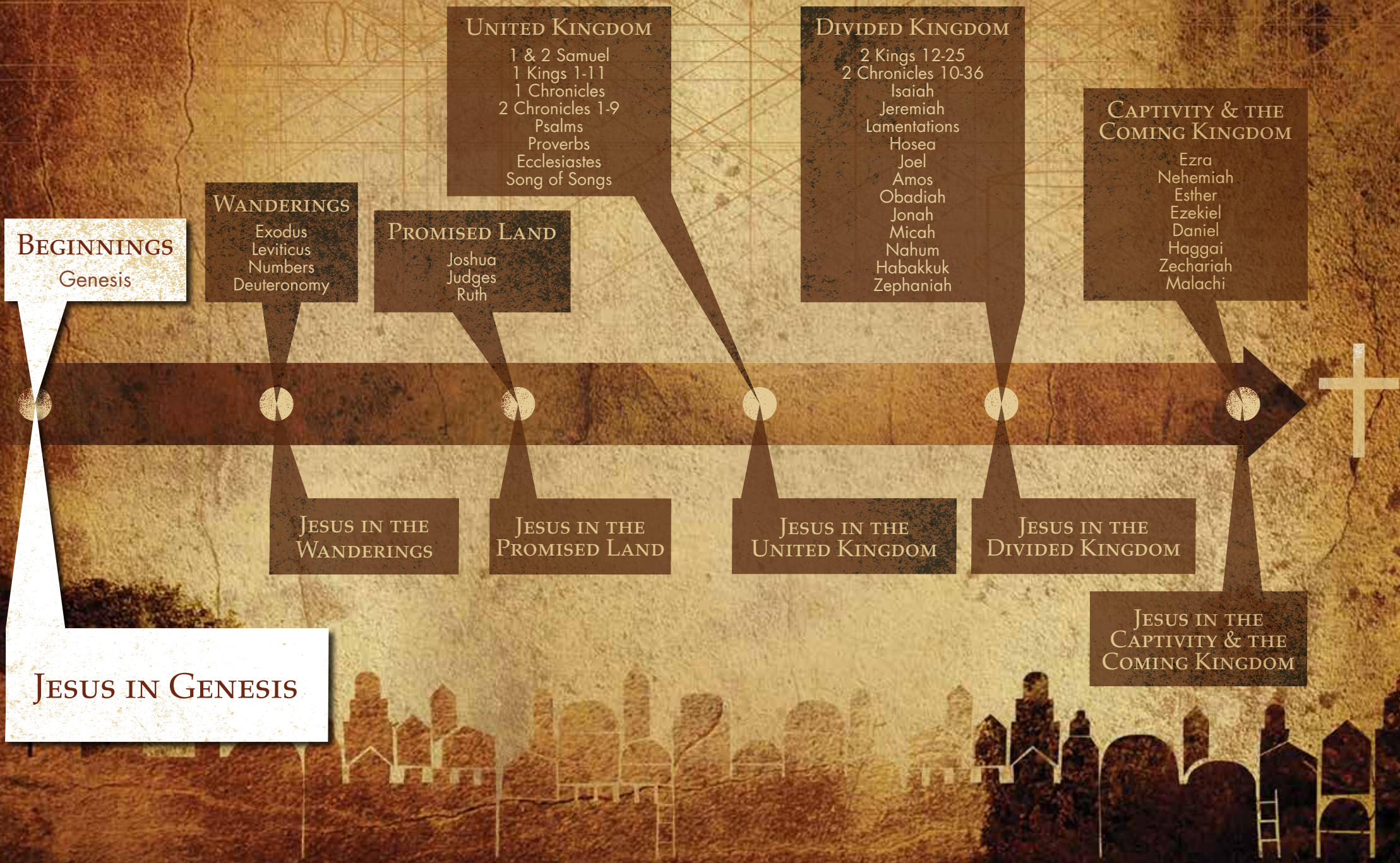
Every day, God is using Walk Thru the Bible to share His Word around the world. We serve the **biblically unengaged**, the **persecuted church**, and **under-resourced pastors** and **Bible teachers**—from India to Honduras, from Kenya to Moldova, from the UK to Venezuela, and the U.S. and Canada, we ignite passion for God's Word.

Every year, that's more than two million souls we impact with God's Word. Every day, that's an opportunity to reach a life with the hope of Scripture. And every day we offer God's truth to a broken world with this certainty:

The Bible changes everything.

For more information about Walk Thru the Bible, visit: www.walkthru.org

Jesus in Genesis



Day 1: Creator

Genesis 1-2

READ JOHN 1:1-5; COLOSSIANS 1:15-17

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . Through him all things were made. (John 1:1, 3 NIV)

John opened his gospel with a pretty astounding statement: Jesus was with God in the beginning. In fact, He was and is God, and He is the one through whom all things were made. Paul wrote essentially the same truths in his letter to the Colossians, calling Jesus the image of the invisible God and the firstborn of all creation. "In him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him" (Colossians 1:16 NIV). But these staggering declarations are not just New Testament inventions; the Old Testament implies a tri-unity within God in the act of creation—"Let Us make man in Our image" (Genesis 1:26 HCSB)—and talks about wisdom as an agent of creation that was with God when He spoke the world into being (Proverbs 8:27-31). God the Father was not alone in the beginning.

How exactly did this work? That's something of a mystery to us—we weren't there, and our finite brains wouldn't comprehend everything that happened at creation anyway. But it's clear from Scripture that Jesus is eternal, divine, and has creative power, and the world was made through Him and for Him. In other words, the answer to that question so many human beings have asked—"What is life all about?"—is Jesus. Not a cause, not a principle, not a theory, but a Person. Jesus is present from the very first verse of the Bible.

This truth helped shape the early years of the church, and it eventually developed into our understanding of the Trinity. There is only one God, but Scripture speaks of Him in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. One essence, three persons and personalities. A fellowship of three in a being of one. A perfect, loving community at the heart of all reality. A way to express love within God's own nature. An eternal story before human history ever began.

If we didn't know this about Jesus, we might consider Him only to be a great teacher or prophet—a miracle worker empowered by God, but still only a man. But the Bible assures us He is more than a man. He is divine, and worthy of worship. He even allowed people to worship Him on several occasions during His earthly ministry. He is able to intercede for us in heaven, having all power and authority in His hands. When Scripture calls Him Immanuel—"God with us"—it speaks quite literally.

Reflection

- Is it important to you personally to know that Jesus was involved in creating the world and has the power to sustain it? Why or why not?
- Why is it significant that the one who created the world also entered into it in the form of a created being? What does that tell us about God's nature?

NOTES/JOURNAL

Bottom Line

Jesus wasn't just a man sent from God. He was God in the flesh and continues to be "God with us."

Pray with the confidence and faith that Jesus has the authority and power to accomplish all of His purposes for your life.

Day 3: The Provided Sacrifice

Genesis 22

READ 1 PETER 1:18-20

God chose him as your ransom long before the world began, but now in these last days he has been revealed for your sake. (1 Peter 1:20 NLT)

God told Abraham to take Isaac, the son of promise, up to a mountaintop to sacrifice him. It had to be an excruciating experience for both father and son, first as Abraham accepted the instruction, and then as Isaac realized what was happening. But the experience is also full of faith. Abraham first tells his servants, "We will come back to you" (Genesis 22:15). Then, when Isaac notices the wood and fire but asks where the sacrifice is, his father replies that God will provide. And as the story unfolds, God does provide. He dramatically stops Abraham and turns his attention to a ram caught by his horns in the thicket. Abraham was willing to offer his greatest treasure: his son. And that willingness was what God was looking for.

It's hard not to notice the parallels between Abraham offering his son and, centuries later, God offering His Son on the same mountain. Isaac was led up the mountain and bound, like a lamb to the slaughter. So was Jesus. A multitude of descendants would come through this son, but only after his father gave him up. Same with Jesus. Even though Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son, he expected to receive him back by resurrection (Hebrews 11:19). So did God in His sacrifice of Jesus. In this story, God painted a startling preview of the cross nearly two millennia later.

Not only does Isaac represent Jesus in this story, but so does the ram caught by his head in the thicket, a kind of crown of thorns, as it were. Unlike other ancient stories of gods and sacrifices, this one shows us a God who not only demands the sacrifice but also provides it. He issues the requirements and then proceeds to satisfy them. The only response He asks for from Abraham is faith. God completes the assignment Himself.

That's a beautiful picture of the gospel. Our sin put us in a position of paying an excruciating cost. God provided a sacrifice so the cost would be on His shoulders rather than ours. We may climb His mountain in obedience, but we find Him there with a provision that accomplishes righteousness on our behalf. God actually did what Abraham was asked and then excused from doing. He gave us His Son.

Reflection

- Why do you think this picture of the Father's sacrifice of the Son so far in the distant past was necessary? In what ways did it prepare hearts to receive Jesus as their God-given sacrifice?
- How does your heart respond to the fact that God provided the very sacrifice He demanded instead of making us supply it?
- How does Abraham's situation—sacrificing the only son through whom promised descendants could come—speak to you about the nature of your faith?

NOTES/JOURNAL

Bottom Line

Through requiring Abraham to sacrifice his precious son—and then supplying a substitute—God gave us a remarkable sneak peek of the cross.

Pray that God would open the eyes of those around you to the sacrifice of Jesus that was planned from before the foundation of the world and that He would draw them to faith in Christ.

Day 4: Open Door to Heaven

Genesis 28:10-22

READ JOHN 1:51

"I assure you: You will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." (John 1:51 HCSB)

Isaac was old and wanted to bless his firstborn son, Esau. So he told Esau to hunt, prepare a meal, and bring it to him and then receive his blessing. But Isaac's wife, Rebekah, favored Esau's twin, Jacob, and wanted him to get the blessing. So she came up with a plan for Jacob to deceive his vision-impaired father and steal the blessing of the firstborn heir.

The plan worked, Esau was furious, and Jacob fled out of fear for his safety. On the surface, he left to find a wife from the old "home country." The deeper reality is that he was avoiding trouble and was surrounded by uncertainty, conflict, passion, and guilt. Such was Jacob's emotional state when he stopped to camp. That night, he had a vivid dream of a stairway leading to heaven with angels ascending and descending on it. He woke up convinced that God was in that place that had looked so ordinary the night before. He called it Bethel, "house of God." In his turmoil, Jacob had a divine encounter.

Many centuries later, when Jesus met Nathanael and told him he would see angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man, He was making an extraordinary claim. He was pointing to Himself as the "way to God," the place where divine encounters occur, the open doorway between heaven and earth. Any Jew would have recognized the reference to Jacob's dream. What Jacob perceived as an intersection between the heavenly and earthly realms became a sign of God's willingness to meet humanity in the midst of our tumultuous, burdensome, complicated situations. And Jesus offered Himself as the fulfillment of that sign. He presented Himself as an encounter with God when we're trying to flee from our problems.

Jesus' words to Nathanael are more than an interesting reference to Hebrew Scripture. They are an invitation to anyone bound in this realm with the longing to connect to another. Heaven really can touch earth because it did in encounters like Jacob's and then more powerfully in the presence of Jesus. Anyone united with Him can live at the intersection between human and divine—where angels ascend and descend and God's works flow into our lives.

Reflection

- If Jacob's "ladder" signified a well-known encounter with God, and Jesus referred to Himself as that ladder, what was He claiming about His identity? If you had been in Nathanael's place, how do you think you would have responded to that claim? What's been your most vivid divine encounter?
- What does it mean for us that Jesus is the gateway between heaven and earth? How does that affect our relationship with the Father? our prayers? our expectations of what God is willing to do for us?

NOTES/JOURNAL

Bottom Line

Jesus is our connection between heaven and earth—the way for us to access heavenly realities and bring the eternal into our mundane, everyday lives.

Pray that you would fully experience everything God intends in your relationship with Jesus and your connection with the divine realm.

Day 5: Rejected Ruler

Genesis 37-50

READ GENESIS 37:5-11; ROMANS 11:25-32

A partial hardening has come to Israel until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. (Romans 11:25 HCSB)

A son of Jacob, dearly loved by his father, made extravagant claims about himself that were considered arrogant by his siblings. He was a delight to his father and offensive to his brothers. They seized him, thought about killing him, relieved him of the "expensive coat" their father had given him, tossed him into a pit, ate lunch, and then sold him to a band of passing merchants. For years, they assumed he was dead, even though he was ministering to Gentiles and preparing for their deliverance.

Who is this—Joseph or Jesus? Well, the description remarkably fits both of them. There are a few distinctions in the symbolism of their lives, but the parallels are striking. The New Testament writers didn't pick up on these parallels; we have no passages telling us that Joseph is a picture of Jesus. But in retrospect, it's hard to miss them. Even the prophecies about Israel continue the connection. Just as Joseph's brothers eventually bowed down to him as their deliverer and recognized who he was, the descendants of Israel will one day bow down to Jesus and recognize Him as their Messiah.

Hebrew Scripture is full of prophecies of the Messiah, but they paint seemingly contradictory portraits. In some prophetic passages, the Messiah is a suffering servant, a figure acquainted with grief. In others, He's a conquering king, a victor who wins battles and establishes His reign. These portraits are so divergent that many ancient Hebrew sages wondered if two Messiahs were coming: a *Masbiach ben Yosef* (Messiah Son of Joseph) and a *Masbiach ben David* (Messiah Son of David)—a sufferer and a victor. As it turns out, there's one Messiah who comes twice, first as a sufferer and then as the victor. The Joseph picture has already been fulfilled. The David picture is yet to come.

Joseph is a startling illustration of how Jesus spent years in the background on earth, and centuries in the background of history. As a rejected, mistreated servant, He didn't look like a deliverer until God brought Him forth and put royal robes on Him, just as Pharaoh did with Joseph. Only eyes of faith can recognize that Jesus is the "rejected Ruler" and make a life-altering decision based on His true identity.

Reflection

- Has Jesus ever seemed hidden to you for long periods of time? If so, how does the story of Joseph encourage you?
- In what ways did Joseph's long wait as a servant and prisoner point to Jesus' ministry? How does it point to the God's promises now—including Jesus' second coming?

Bottom Line

Through His suffering, Jesus became a means of deliverance for many.

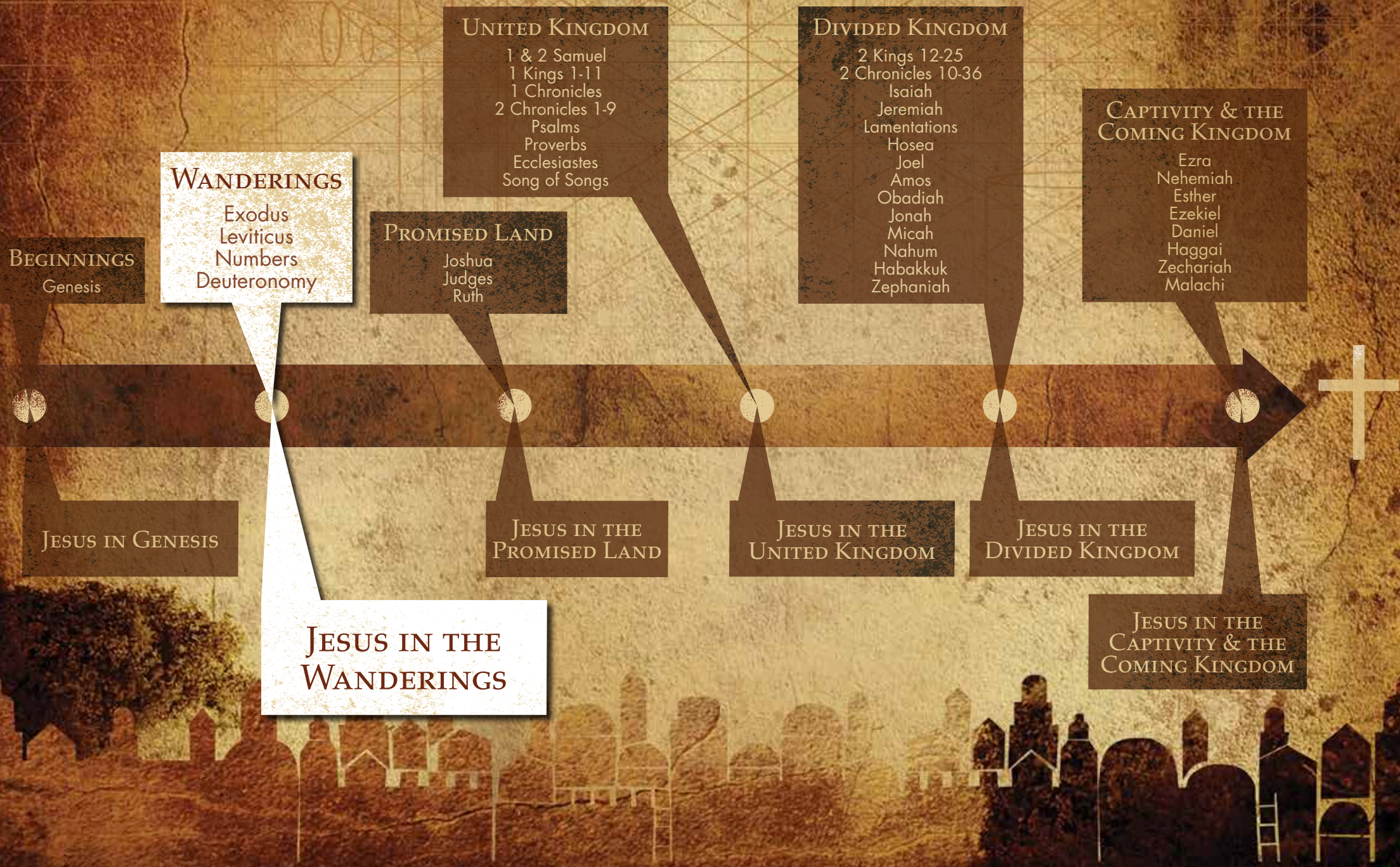
Pray for those who do not recognize Jesus to be drawn to Him. Thank Him that God's story does not end with His suffering but with His victory.

NOTES/JOURNAL

Look ahead

The journey of Joseph's family to Egypt began as Israel's salvation from famine, but over the next four centuries, it would result in a long captivity. Joseph delivered them into Egypt. Who will deliver them out? The story continues with a dramatic rescue and, as is often the case with God, years of waiting and longing for a promise.

Jesus in the Wanderings



Day 1: The Lamb

Exodus 12

READ EXODUS 12:1-13; MATTHEW 26:27-28; 1 CORINTHIANS 5:7

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29 NIV)

The death of the firstborn was the last of the 10 plagues God used to deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage. He instructed the Israelites to sacrifice a lamb and smear its blood on their door frames. When He passed through the land on the night of the plague, He promised to "pass over" the households where the blood had been applied. But in the houses of the Egyptians, where no blood was visible, God would strike down the firstborn son. In God's eyes the only difference between the sons of Egypt and the sons of Israel would be the blood of the lamb.

Later, when God gave Moses instructions for Israel's elaborate sacrificial system, He told the priests to sacrifice a lamb every morning on the altar of the tabernacle (and later the temple) and another one in the evening (Exodus 29:38-39). This offering was widely seen in Israel as a covering for sin. It was one of the sacrifices that made it possible for human beings to enter the presence of God.

Both of these stories picture Jesus. He gave an offering of His own blood so God would pass over us in the judgment. When we, in a spiritual but real sense, apply His blood to the "door posts" of our lives, we escape the punishment that all humanity deserves for its rebellion against Him. We are delivered from captivity to sin and brought into—if not a land—a new life of promise. We become participants in an Exodus much greater than the one God accomplished through Moses. We are set free.

Jesus also fits the picture of the daily sacrificial lamb at the entrance to the tabernacle and the temple. He takes away the sin of the world and allows us to enter the presence of God. These daily sacrifices throughout Hebrew history did not fully and finally deal with sin, and Scripture never claims that they did. But they pointed to the once-and-for-all sacrifice that does remove our sin and cleanse us from it. When John the Baptist pointed to Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, he saw Jesus as the coming sacrifice, God's provision for our deepest need.

In both of these pictures, the lamb and its blood are the covering for human beings who did absolutely nothing to earn God's favor. All they did was apply the blood to their lives. God made the provision; the human response was to accept it. According to the New Testament, that's how we are saved. God gave us Jesus; we accept Him. Then, in gratitude and faith, we follow Him the rest of our lives.

Reflection

- Why do you think God chose blood as a symbol of the Passover and of forgiveness of sin? According to Leviticus 17:14, what does it represent?
- What do you think it means to apply the blood of the Lamb to the doorposts of your life? How do we make Jesus' sacrifice effective for us?

NOTES/JOURNAL

Bottom Line

The Cross was not an accident or a disappointing end to Jesus' life. His earthly mission was not to teach or do miracles or set a good example. He came to die as a sacrificial Lamb for the sins of the world.

Pray Thank God for the blood that covers our sins and the way of salvation He has provided. Pray for those in your life who do not yet believe in Him.

Day 2: The Presence

Exodus 25-27

READ JOHN 1:14; HEBREWS 9; REVELATION 11:19

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. (John 1:14 NIV)

At Mount Sinai, after Israel had been delivered from Egypt and was beginning its journey to the Promised Land, God instructed His people to build a tabernacle—a mobile tent of worship where they could meet with Him on their journey. Priests would make sacrifices there, and the inner room of the tabernacle would be designated as the Holy of Holies, the Most Holy Place, where God would come to dwell and speak. The tabernacle, and later the temple, became the central place of Israel's worship. It represented God's gift of His own presence—His desire to be with them.

John 1:14 says that the Word (i.e., Jesus, the eternal Son of God) became flesh and came to dwell among us—literally that He “tabernacled” among us. He pitched His tent in the midst of human beings on a journey to the land of promise. He was and is Immanuel, “God with us.”

In the New Testament, Jesus is portrayed as the fulfillment of the tabernacle itself and of many articles of worship that were placed in the tabernacle. The ark of the covenant was in the Most Holy Place within the tabernacle, and it was made out of wood and covered with gold. Its lid was a “mercy seat” with two sculpted angels on each end looking at the center that would be sprinkled with sacrificial blood. In many ways, Jesus is portrayed as the true ark of the covenant and presence of God, the place where God speaks and meets with His people. The wood represents His humanity, the gold His divinity, and the blood on the mercy seat His sacrificial death.

The other articles placed in the tabernacle—the golden lampstand, the bread of the presence, the basin of cleansing water, and more—are also highly symbolic of Jesus and His ministry to us. Likewise, the God-ordained arrangement of Israel's tribes around the tabernacle when the nation was encamped, essentially formed a cross with the tabernacle at the center. The not-so-hidden message is that Jesus Himself is the presence of God among human beings, and God gave us signs pointing to Him centuries before He actually came. Those signs were deeply imbedded in Israel's worship from the first days of their deliverance until the Messiah was born among them. The tabernacle is the greatest evidence in Israel's story that God does not want to be distant, that He wants to dwell among us. And Jesus is the fulfillment of the tabernacle.

Reflection

- What is significant to you about God being with His people as they journeyed through the wilderness? How does that truth help you as you seek to live by faith?
- The entire purpose of the tabernacle was for God to set up a way to be with His people. What changes when we live with the confidence that God is, indeed, with us? Why do we need Him to be a present rather than a distant God?

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Bottom Line

Jesus came to embody God among us and to give us gracious access to God's presence in our lives.

Pray for a deeper, ever-increasing sense of God's presence, that you would fully experience the fellowship with Him you were designed for.

Day 3: The Sin-Bearer

Leviticus 16; Numbers 19:1-10

READ HEBREWS 13:11-14

For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:21 NLT)

On the Day of Atonement, the most sobering and sacred day on the Hebrew calendar, the high priest would enter the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle (and later the temple) to make atonement for the nation. All other Jewish feasts involved feasting and celebration. This one required fasting, as sacrifices were made for the nation’s sins and the people were cleansed and set apart for God.

One of the rituals on that day, prescribed in Leviticus 16, was for two goats to be brought before the priest. One goat was designated to be sacrificed as a sin offering for the nation, and was slaughtered on the altar as other offerings were throughout the year. Its blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat in the Most Holy Place. The other goat was designated to be driven into the wilderness to carry sin away and remove it far from the people, never to return. One goat was an offering to atone for sins, to symbolize a payment of the punishment for them. The other was to remove the presence of sin. The priest would confess the sins of the people over this second goat, the “scapegoat,” to lay the weight of sinfulness on it. It became a representation of evil, was taken far from the city, and driven into the wilderness.

Over time, in order to prevent the scapegoat from wandering back into the city, symbolically bringing with it all the nation’s sins, Israel’s priests developed the practice of driving the goat over a cliff in the wilderness. They couldn’t kill it directly without it becoming an overt sacrifice, but they could arrange its death. They drove the goat and the sins it was carrying to a place of no return.

Another ritual prescribed later involved a red heifer (Numbers 19). It was a sacrifice used primarily for the ritual cleansing of those who had come in contact with death—a different kind of purification from sin. Virtually all of Israel’s sacrifices were made inside the tabernacle or temple, with the bodies being taken outside the camp to be burned later. But the heifer was actually slaughtered outside the camp. Hebrews 9:13-14 and 13:11-13 point to the heifer specifically and other sacrifices generally as pictures of Jesus’ crucifixion. He was taken outside the walls of “the camp”—the city of Jerusalem—to be killed and buried and to become our cleansing for sin and death. Like a sacrificial animal, He carries our sin and punishment away.

Reflection

- Why is it important for us not only to be forgiven of sin but to be cleansed of it—to have it removed from our midst? How does Jesus do this for us?
- Jesus is pictured as our “red heifer,” the one who cleanses us from the contamination of death. How does this help you overcome any fears about death?

NOTES/JOURNAL

Bottom Line

Jesus came to remove sin and death from our midst.

Pray Acknowledge the seriousness of your sin before God and thank Him for removing your sins through Jesus. Pray to fully experience the freedom He gives—especially freedom from the fear of death.

Day 4: Bread and Water

Exodus 16:1-17:7

READ JOHN 6:35-58; 7:37-39

They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.
 (1 Corinthians 10:3-4 NIV)

After Israel was on the safe side of the Red Sea, with Egypt behind them and the Egyptian army devastated by the waters, its people entered into a wilderness. The exhilaration of their miraculous victory quickly gave way to complaints about their environment. It seemed they had merely swapped a harsh life of slavery in Egypt for a brutal death in the wilderness east of Egypt. They had no food. They grumbled against Aaron and Moses—and, by extension, against God.

So God gave them manna to eat. It was a hard-to-define wafer-like substance. If this tells you anything, the name *manna*, best as Hebrew scholars can tell, means “what is it?” It was known as the bread from heaven, and the people were allowed to gather it every day except the Sabbath. God sustained them with this substance throughout their wilderness years—an entire generation—until they entered the Promised Land. It wasn’t permanent provision; it was God’s answer to an immediate need. It was vital nourishment for His people.

Soon after, the people found themselves in a place with no water at all. They went through the same process—grumbling against Moses, putting God to the test until He responded with provision. In this case, God instructed Moses to strike a large rock with his staff. Water began to flow from the rock, and the people were able to drink. Moses called the place Massah and Meriba (testing and quarreling) because the people had tested God again and He had proven Himself.

In John 6:35-58, Jesus referred to Himself as the true bread that comes down from heaven, a clear reference to manna, but with much bigger implications. He is the one who sustains God’s people in the wilderness of this world. He is the nourishment of life. Without Him, we starve. A chapter later, He referred to Himself as the source of the living, flowing water that brings life in its fullness. The implication of both of these claims is not only that the manna and water from the rock in the wilderness symbolize Jesus and point to Him; He was also the guiding, sustaining presence of God for Israel in their wilderness wanderings. He saved them physically in the Old Testament, and in much deeper ways in the New. He is the provision for all of our needs.

Reflection

- According to these stories of manna and water from Exodus, it’s clear that God doesn’t want to hear His people complaining. What’s your default response when faced with difficult or seemingly impossible situations?
- In what ways is Jesus “bread” and “water” for you? What does He offer—physically, spiritually, emotionally, mentally, relationally, etc.—to nourish and strengthen you?

NOTES/JOURNAL

Bottom Line

Only Jesus can meet the deepest hunger and thirst of our souls.

Pray that God would make you more grateful and less of a grumbler. Ask Him to intensify your soul’s hunger and thirst for Him.

Day 5: The Prophet

Deuteronomy 18:15-18

READ DEUTERONOMY 18:15-18; JOHN 1:45; 6:14

After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world." (John 6:14 NIV)

In Deuteronomy, near the end of Israel's wilderness years, Moses issued a landmark prophecy that would stir the people's hopes for generations and centuries to come. He foretold another prophet—one like him—who would one day come. He didn't say when or under what circumstances. He simply promised that rather than needing to rely on sorcery and witchcraft like the nations that would surround them, the Israelites would be guided by a prophet.

Many centuries later, Jesus took three of His disciples up on a mountain, where He was transformed in their sight and Moses and Elijah appeared. Moses was known as Israel's lawgiver and greatest prophet; Elijah was seen as the prototypical prophet of later history and writings. As the disciples experienced this overwhelming scene, the two ancient visitors faded away and Jesus remained. A voice from heaven—the *bat kol*, a direct, audible proclamation from God—said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" (Matthew 17:5 NIV). This message ended with the same words Moses used when foretelling the future prophet: "You must listen to him" (Deuteronomy 18:15). The Father was pointing to Jesus as the fulfillment of the promise.

This prophet was generally thought to be one and the same as Messiah, so expectations ran high in the years leading up to the time of Christ. The nation wanted someone to deliver it from Rome just as Moses had delivered the children of Israel from Egypt. Though Jesus brought a much greater deliverance than Moses and was God's own Son, He was like Moses in other ways too: unexpected, uninvited, and unaccepted by many of the people He came to deliver; a mediator or intercessor between God and humanity; and the herald of a new covenant with God. Both Moses and Jesus revealed the will of God to His people and inaugurated a new era of salvation history.

Reflection

- What do you think Jews expected as they anticipated the "prophet like Moses" to come? In what ways did Jesus fulfill this expectation? In what ways did He transcend it?
- How does Jesus speak most clearly to you today?

Bottom Line

Jesus is the greatest prophet and ultimate expression of the Father's voice, and we must listen to Him diligently.

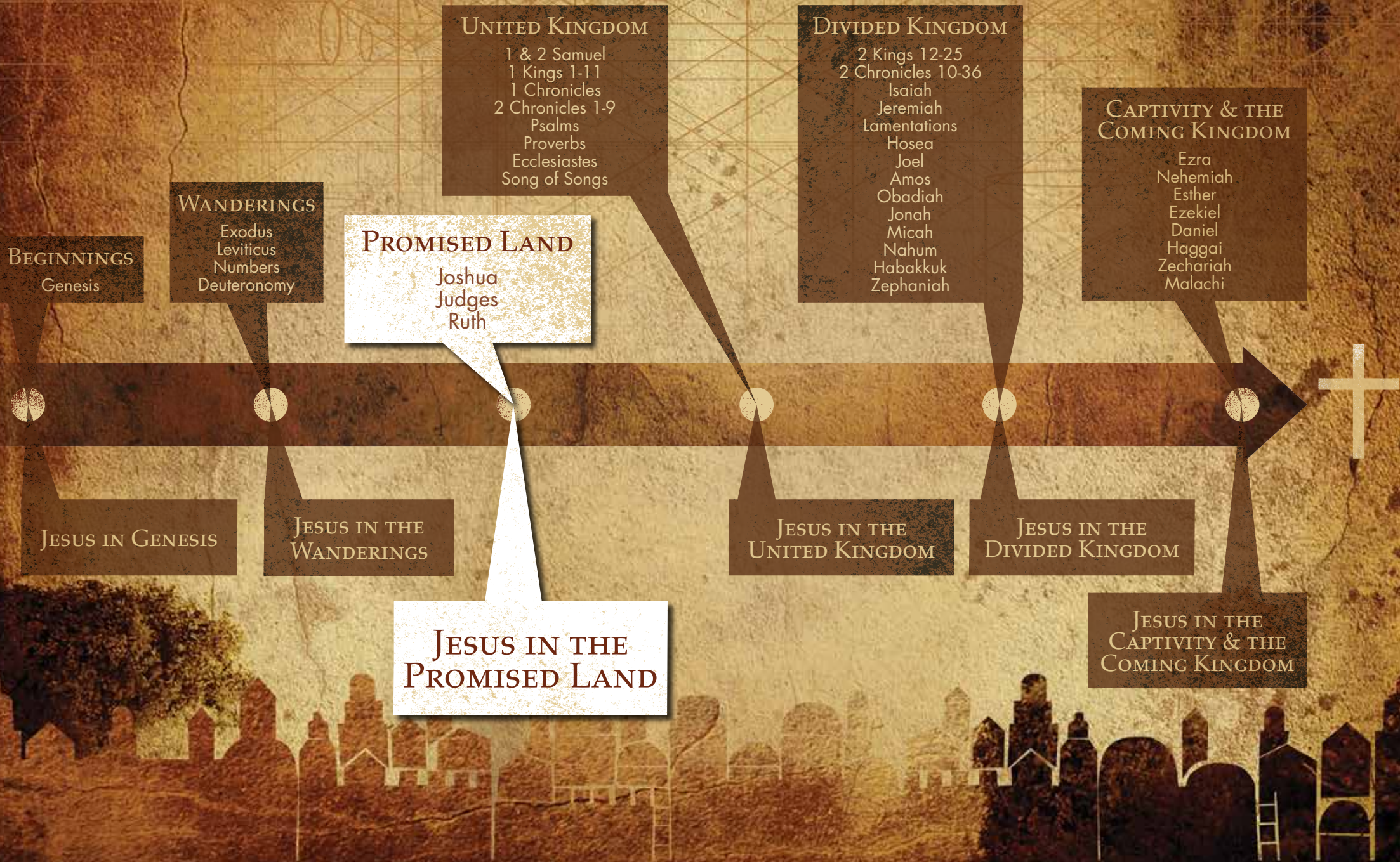
Pray Thank God that He is not silent—that He speaks to His people and guides us in every area of life. Ask to hear Him more clearly and follow Jesus more closely.

NOTES/JOURNAL

Look ahead

God will bring His people into the Promised Land, not through Moses but under the leadership of his successor, Joshua. Just as the lawgiver did not lead people fully into the promise of Israel's own land, neither does the law lead us into the promise of God's kingdom. For that, we need Jesus—in Hebrew, the same name as Joshua—who fulfills God's promises for us.

Jesus in the Promised Land



Day 1: Fulfillment

Joshua 1, 3-4

READ JOSHUA 1:1-9; HEBREWS 4:1-11

If Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. Therefore, a Sabbath rest remains for God's people. (Hebrews 4:8-9 HCSB)

Moses had led Israel for a generation, and God had proven again and again that he was the chosen deliverer for His people. But Moses died before getting to the Promised Land, and it was left to Joshua to take the people in. Joshua had spent years listening for God's voice and following Moses' lead. In terms of leadership skills, he was ready. But was he ready emotionally? And were the people willing to follow him after following Moses all those years? Only after God gave Joshua plenty of encouragement and extravagant promises, and then demonstrated to the people that Moses' authority had fallen to his successor.

It's significant that as great as Moses was, he would never be known as the one who led Israel into the promise. Like the law God gave through him, he could only lead up to the promise, not into it. It's also significant that Joshua and Jesus have essentially the same name: "God is salvation." The law can't deliver anyone into the rich promises of God. Only the rich grace of God can do that. The Promised Land is given, not earned or achieved. And the names of both Joshua and Jesus affirm that God is the author of the journey and ensures its ultimate success.

In many respects, it's not hard to envision Joshua as a picture of Jesus. Both are described as humble, yet both are seen as victorious commanders of God's armies. Both appointed 12 men as leaders under them. Both promised an inheritance to God's people. And both are said to have led God's people into a place of rest and abundance. But Joshua's victories were partial and temporary; Israel's territory expanded and contracted several times in the centuries after his death. Not so with the Messiah, whose kingdom never ceases to expand (Isaiah 9:7). Subsequent generations soon forgot God's faithfulness to their forefathers, with the result that they lost much of what Joshua and their people had gained. By contrast, Jesus' victories are decisive and forever.

Only Jesus can lead people into the Promised Land of true abundance and fruitfulness, where the land flows with much more satisfying milk and honey and people really do live in safety and security. Whatever God promised for His people long ago in the Promised Land, He fulfills in much greater and more ultimate terms in Jesus.

Reflection

- In what ways has Jesus already fulfilled God's promises of peace, abundance, security, and fruitfulness? In what ways are those promises yet to be fulfilled in Him?
- In what ways did Israel's entrance into the Promised Land illustrate the promised rest of God? How have *you* experienced rest in your relationship with Jesus?

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Bottom Line

Just as Joshua led Israel into their Promised Land, Jesus leads His followers into the fullness of all God's glorious promises.

Pray to experience the fulfillment of every promise God has given you, which Jesus has accomplished through His obedience and faith.

Day 2: Salvation

Joshua 2

READ JOSHUA 2:17-21; HEBREWS 11:31

“Though your sins are like scarlet, I will make them as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, I will make them as white as wool.”
(Isaiah 1:18 NLT)

Joshua sent spies into Jericho to scout out the city, and the spies depended heavily on the hospitality of a prostitute named Rahab. She had heard of Israel’s wanderings in the wilderness, and how God had delivered them and given them victory over every enemy. She chose not to side with her own people but, by faith, to put her hopes in the God of Israel. So at great risk to herself—What if the king’s messengers thoroughly searched her house and discovered the spies? What if the spies forgot about her when they invaded Jericho?—she gave shelter and strategic advice to the spies in exchange for their pledge of protection. In other words, she placed her trust in those who could save her.

How did she signify that? By hanging a scarlet cord out of her window as a sign for all Israelite warriors to spare her household. It represents an even longer scarlet cord that weaves its way throughout Scripture: the sacrifice of Jesus is reflected in numerous passages that describe blood as a covering, a payment for sin, a symbol of salvation, or a price of victory. God expressed this scarlet theme through Isaiah in promising to make the sins of His people as white as snow if they would turn to Him. Rahab did turn to Him, and she was saved.

That in itself is remarkable. Israel had just been given a law that did not look favorably on sinners and foreigners, especially those inhabiting the Promised Land. Rahab was a sinful woman and a Canaanite. But the law was kind toward sinners who repent and foreigners who align themselves with the people of God. This Gentile woman was a hero in this story, became one of God’s chosen people by faith, and eventually married into the family of God. She is one of the remarkable women who shows up in the genealogy of Jesus.

All this can only happen because of the scarlet cord that God wove into His plan. Rahab represented His salvation by hanging a cord from her window, and that cord became a symbol of redemption. There is no more beautiful picture of that redemption than a morally unclean Gentile woman who turned to God in faith. Throughout Scripture, God gives us ample evidence that salvation comes by faith rather than self-effort and moral uprightness. Rahab and her cord are a beautiful picture of that gospel.

Reflection

- Why do you think the spies were so willing to accept a woman who was living in clear violation of the laws they had been given? What does their acceptance of her—and God’s vindication of her—say about His mercy?
- Rahab could have betrayed the spies and ended their lives with just a word. Why do you think they trusted her?

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Bottom Line

Salvation comes by recognizing who God is and placing our faith in Him, regardless of whether or not it goes against our culture.

Pray to have the kind of faith that Rahab demonstrated, and ask God that many more Rahabs would recognize Him and be welcomed among His people.

Day 3: Victor

Joshua 5-6

READ JOSHUA 5:13-6:25; HEBREWS 11:30

He disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross. (Colossians 2:15 NLT)

Jericho was a well-fortified city with thick walls and plenty of warriors. Because attacking such a city must have been an intimidating prospect for Israel’s people, God told Joshua numerous times to be strong and courageous, and relayed the message to his army and the general population. Militarily, they were overmatched. By human standards, the situation looked impossible.

But not long before Israel’s battle against Jericho, Joshua encountered a man with a drawn sword. He was a divine visitor, a messenger with a larger purpose than the battle at hand. When Joshua asked him whose side he was on, the divine messenger refused to choose. He was a commander of the Lord’s army. The real question was who was on *his* side. Joshua bowed down in reverence and submitted to an authority much higher than his own.

This commander of the Lord’s army could have been an angel, but he seemed to allow Joshua to worship him, which an angel of God would never do. For this reason, many people speculate that this is Jesus hundreds of years before His earthly advent. And it makes sense; Jesus comes to win victories. No walls are too thick for Him, no army too strong. He demonstrated in the gospels that no matter how impossible a situation looks—even as impossible as a sealed tomb—He can overcome it. When He enters the battle, everything changes. If He fights, He wins.

That’s how Joshua’s encounter with the mysterious commander of the Lord’s army points to New Testament victories. God would soon lead Joshua in a strategy that made absolutely no sense militarily. It looked absurd. The idea that marching around a city seven days in a row, 13 times in total, and adding some shouts and trumpet blasts could win the victory is laughable. Except that it was God’s plan, and He backed it up with His power. Centuries later, the idea that a Messiah could suffer and die by humiliating execution in order to conquer evil and overcome death appeared laughable too. But God backed it up with His power. The two commanders who met near Jericho before the battle had a lot in common. And the one who bowed learned how to win supernatural victories through the one who stood with a drawn sword.

Reflection

- How do you think you would have responded if God gave you the instructions He gave Joshua—to defeat Jericho by marching around it? Why do you think His directions often go against our understanding?
- Think of an impossible situation you have faced or are facing now. How has God encouraged you in that situation? How can you avoid giving up hope in those faith-testing situations?

NOTES/JOURNAL

Bottom Line

Jesus is the commander of God’s armies and the source of victory over all enemies, including death.

Pray Like Joshua, bow to Jesus and side with Him rather than asking Him to side with you. Ask to experience His victories for His kingdom in every area of your life.

Day 4: Deliverer

Judges

READ JUDGES 3:9, 15; 6:7-10; LUKE 2:25-32;
REVELATION 19:11-16

*I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war.
(Revelation 19:11 niv)*

During the period of the judges—after entering the Promised Land but before having a king—Israel frequently lived under oppression from its neighbors. It was their own fault. They weren’t supposed to follow any king or worship any deity other than God, but they kept turning away from Him and toward the idols and gods of their new neighbors. They neglected His law and did whatever seemed right in their own eyes. So God disciplined them by letting them suffer the consequences of their rebellion. They put their trust in idols and got what those idols could provide: nothing.

The common cycle in the book of Judges begins with Israel’s rebellion and idolatry, which results in their suffering under the oppression of another power, during which they cry out to God, and He eventually raises up a deliverer, or a “judge,” to lead them. This cycle repeats again and again, and often (but not always) with a judge who has serious character flaws.

So where is Jesus pictured in this cycle? In the deliverance. This cycle of rebellion, oppression, and deliverance is not just Israel’s story more than 3,000 years ago. It’s also the story of the human race at almost any time. We all experience the consequences of sin and cry out to God in one way or another. Collectively, we have longed for a deliverer, even putting our hopes in unworthy ones from time to time. God heard our cries and sent us one.

Because many of the deliverers in the book of Judges are extremely flawed, it may seem like a stretch to see them as pictures of Jesus. But the fact that God hears our laments when we suffer the consequences of rebellion, forgives us, and sends help is a picture of the ultimate deliverance and help He provided in sending His Son. We thoroughly deserved the consequences we suffered, but He gave us glory and freedom instead. He gave us the warrior King we longed for, and He overthrows the oppressors from our lives. He wages war with the truth and justice we need.

Reflection

- Are there any areas of life in which you feel oppressed? If so, regardless of the cause—whether of your own doing or the fault of others—how do you think God will respond to your cries for help? In what ways does He desire to deliver you?
- What do all the cycles in Judges tell you about human nature? What do all those deliverances tell you about God’s nature?

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Bottom Line

There are no man-made messes from which God is unable to rescue the humble.

Pray with confidence and faith that Jesus has the authority and power to deliver you and/or your loved ones from self-inflicted trouble.

Day 5: Redeemer

Ruth

READ RUTH 3:1-4:12; TITUS 2:13-14

“Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them.” (Luke 1:68 NIV)

According to God’s law, each family’s piece of the inheritance in the Promised Land was to remain within the family, if at all possible (see Leviticus 25:25, for example). That meant that whenever someone needed to sell land to get out of debt, the nearest relatives had to be given the option to buy it before anyone else could. It also meant that whenever a man died without heirs, his nearest surviving male relative was obligated to marry his widow and father heirs through her. Otherwise, families risked losing their piece of the promised inheritance.

Several of those laws were at play in the story of Naomi and Ruth, a mother and daughter-in-law who returned to Israel from Moab as widows on the verge of losing the family inheritance. Naomi had lost everything—a field in Israel, her husband, and her two sons—so she needed a family member to step forward and help. Ruth approached Boaz, a kind relative of her dead husband, inviting him to redeem her and the property. After clearing it with an even closer relative, Boaz gladly agreed. The widows who had lost hope suddenly found it again. Naomi’s bitterness over her hardships gave way to joy. The family’s inheritance remained in the family, and God restored their lives.

We also long for redemption. Just as Naomi’s family left the Promised Land and nearly lost everything, the human race left Eden and lost many of the blessings God wanted to give us. We’ve each experienced this; we know about brokenness and loss. Life is not as it should be. Yet God is gracious to sustain and bless us anyway, even when we aren’t living in our Promised Land. Still, we crave a deeper, fuller restoration. We need someone to buy us back, to restore what we’ve lost, to keep our inheritance safe for us by bringing us back into the family. We need a redeemer. That’s what Jesus does for us. He buys back what we lost. He is the member of God’s family who steps in and provides what we could not provide for ourselves. He brings us back to God who adopts us into His family and promises us the full inheritance of His kingdom. Jesus restores our lives.

Reflection

- In what areas of life have you experienced loss and brokenness? How does the story of Naomi and Ruth encourage you about God’s plan to restore fullness in those areas?
- Is there any area of life in which you’ve lost hope? In what ways do you think God wants to renew your hope through the story of Ruth?

Bottom Line

The salvation Jesus gives us is comprehensive, including not only redemption from sin, but restoration of all that sin has stolen from us.

Pray for restoration in every area of your life and the lives of those around you. Ask to experience the full extent of the redemption Jesus offers.

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Look ahead

As the era of judges gives way to the era of kings, we get some strong pictures of what royalty should and shouldn’t look like. We also discover God’s heart for His people—and the kind of ruler He truly is for us. The nature of His kingdom begins to take shape.

Jesus in the United Kingdom

UNITED KINGDOM

1 & 2 Samuel
1 Kings 1-11
1 Chronicles
2 Chronicles 1-9
Psalms
Proverbs
Ecclesiastes
Song of Songs

DIVIDED KINGDOM

2 Kings 12-25
2 Chronicles 10-36
Isaiah
Jeremiah
Lamentations
Hosea
Joel
Amos
Obadiah
Jonah
Micah
Nahum
Habakkuk
Zephaniah

CAPTIVITY & THE COMING KINGDOM

Ezra
Nehemiah
Esther
Ezekiel
Daniel
Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi

WANDERINGS

Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy

PROMISED LAND

Joshua
Judges
Ruth

BEGINNINGS

Genesis

JESUS IN GENESIS

JESUS IN THE
WANDERINGS

JESUS IN THE
PROMISED LAND

JESUS IN THE
UNITED KINGDOM

JESUS IN THE
DIVIDED KINGDOM

JESUS IN THE
CAPTIVITY & THE
COMING KINGDOM



Day 1: Promised Child

1 Samuel 1-15

READ 1 SAMUEL 1:1-2:11; LUKE 1:5-56

*"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the holy One to be born will be called the Son of God."
(Luke 1:35 HCSB)*

Barrenness is a common theme in God’s Word. The ground became barren after the Fall (Genesis 3:17-19), and the world experienced droughts and famines, but the barrenness of a couple longing for a child becomes a prominent issue too. Abraham and Sarah waited well into their old age before God finally fulfilled His promise of descendants. Rebekah, Rachel, and Samson’s mother also spent years in barrenness until God finally enabled them to become pregnant. In every case, He did an unusual work through their children’s lives. So as 1 Samuel opens with Hannah lamenting her childlessness, we know something significant is about to happen.

It did. Samuel was born in answer to Hannah’s prayers, and she dedicated him to God. He became a key, stabilizing, transition figure between the period of the judges and the monarchy. God changed the course of a nation through a barren woman’s prayer.

The New Testament story begins the same way, with Elizabeth, the wife of a priest, being childless until her old age. An angel visits her husband and announces their coming child—John the Baptist, another key transition figure between two ages. And soon after, the angel appears to a young woman who is not barren but is still a virgin. She too will conceive and bear a child, the Son of God Himself.

This theme of barrenness and/or miraculous childbirth seems to come to the surface in Scripture anytime God wants to say, “What’s about to happen is beyond natural human activity. It’s Me intervening in human affairs to do something only I can do.” It’s also a beautiful illustration of how He steps into our curse and makes things right. Yes, we live in a world that knows barrenness because of our rebellion, but He forgave the rebellion and redeemed us from our losses. He does the impossible by bringing life into lifeless situations.

Samuel is a picture of this truth. His mother was desperate, and God answered her prayers. He gave her a son who would become a prophet, a priest, and an anointer of kings ushering in a new era. In doing so, he foreshadowed another miraculous Son who would become the ultimate prophet, the great High Priest, and the anointed King Himself. This Son would usher in an entirely new age.

Reflection

- In what ways do you experience barrenness in your life—in work, relationships, finances, interests, etc.? In what ways do stories of God’s miraculous intervention encourage you?
- Many women who were childless waited years—even long after hope had gone—to experience God’s fulfillment. What would Samuel’s life have been like if he had been born to Hannah in normal timing? In what ways did her frustration (a) make Samuel’s birth unique and (b) contribute to God’s plan?

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Bottom Line

God gives life, even in lifeless places. He accomplishes great things even when our situations look impossible.

Pray for the fullness of God’s life and purposes in your life and the lives of those around you. Thank Him that no situation is truly barren in His kingdom.

Day 2: Shepherd King

1 Samuel 16-31; 2 Samuel; Psalms

READ 2 SAMUEL 7:14-16; PSALM 78:70-72; JOHN 10:1-18

"God testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.' From this man's descendants God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as he promised." (Acts 13:22-23 NIV)

Israel's first king was focused on his own power and prestige, even to the point of neglecting God's instructions, so God chose someone else—a man after His own heart—to replace Saul. David didn't look the part at first; even his own family couldn't envision him in the role. He was a shepherd boy who had plenty of time to sing poetry and live among animals in the open fields. But God has a shepherd heart Himself, and He chose a shepherd to lead His people. With skillful hands and integrity of heart, that's exactly what David did (Psalm 78:72). He cared for God's people as a shepherd cares for his sheep.

That theme comes up often in David's psalms, most notably Psalm 23. It also comes up in David's dealings with people—most of the time. He was fiercely protective of the vulnerable, sensitive to the needs of others, and willing to lead decisively. And he sought God's heart with passion.

No wonder God promised to establish David's reign forever and put a son of David on an everlasting throne. David expressed God's heart. He became Israel's prototypical king and the picture of what the future messianic King would look like. The Messiah would need to be as fierce as a warrior, as passionate as a poet, and as tender as a shepherd because that's the kind of king God sought for His people.

Jesus fit that description even better than David did—and without the character flaws and mistakes that emerged during David's reign. He came announcing the good news of God's kingdom and pointing to Himself as the one who will reign. But He came in the spirit of a shepherd. He promised that His sheep would be able to recognize His voice. He pledged to lead His sheep wherever they needed to go for safety and provision. He even promised to lay down His life for His sheep. And He did.

That's the King's heart. And unlike David, Christ the King will not merely reign for a few decades and then pass His kingdom down to another. He will sit on the throne, shepherding and leading His people with skillful hands and integrity forever.

Reflection

- Why do you think God allowed Saul to reign first before bringing David to the throne as the king He truly desired? What does the contrast between a self-centered king and a God-centered king show us?
- What do you think it means to be a person after God's own heart? What does that look like in daily life? in major decisions? in failures and mistakes?

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Bottom Line

Jesus is not an overbearing, dictatorial king but rather a tender-hearted shepherd-warrior who cares for and fights for His people.

Pray for the kind of heart that seeks God above all else and represents His desires and purposes to the world.

Day 3: Peace

1 Kings 1-11

READ 1 KINGS 4:24-25; ISAIAH 9:6; EPHESIANS 2:14-18

For he himself is our peace. (Ephesians 2:14 NIV)

David had a son with Bathsheba, and they named him Solomon—a word derived from *shalom*, or “peace.” It was an appropriate name, as Solomon’s reign became the first time in Israel’s history that the nation had peace on every side (1 Kings 4:24-25). In fact, this era was (and still is) considered Israel’s Golden Age, and the descriptions from this time of everyone having their own vine and eating under their own fig tree became common expressions for God’s kingdom in the messianic age. The king named “peace” pictured a coming reign of fullness, wholeness, abundance, and joy, in which all is right in the world.

That’s really what *shalom* means. It’s more than just peace. It’s so much more than just “the absence of angry conflict,” it’s the presence of wholeness and fullness, fruitfulness and satisfaction. *Shalom* is the rich abundant life that God originally intended. So when Isaiah later prophesied of the Messiah that He would be the Prince of *Shalom*, he was pointing to something much more significant than a time of no war. He meant that the Messiah would truly bring in the Golden Age of history, and everyone under His reign would experience the fullness and abundance they were created for.

That’s why Solomon is a picture of the coming Messiah. He isn’t a perfect picture, to be sure. He had flaws, many of which grew deeper and more visible later in his life. He did not end well. But for a brief moment in history, Israel’s territory reached its maximum area, its enemies became friends and allies, its resources were spent not on war but on God-honoring projects like the temple, and wisdom flourished. Solomon represented everything God intended for His kingdom to be—in one place, and for one time.

The Messiah’s reign won’t be just for a moment or in one location. It has already begun—Jesus said so when He came, and the prophets had already pointed to that time—and we see it in glimpses and seasons. But when it comes in its fullness, it will be everywhere and for always. The prophets envisioned times of fierce animals lying down together, swords being beaten into plowshares, everyone living to a ripe old age, and fruitfulness everywhere in the land. *Shalom* will not just be a longing or a fleeting experience. It will be the environment we live in. And the Prince of *Shalom* will reign forever.

Reflection

- Think of some ways you have longed for *shalom*. What would it look like in your life? How do you envision it? What would give you a greater sense of fullness and completion?
- In what ways can we experience *shalom* now, before the kingdom comes in all its fullness? How does Jesus provide peace and abundance today?

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Bottom Line

The peace and fullness Israel experienced under Solomon’s reign was only a weak hint of the joy we will experience under Jesus’ ultimate reign.

Pray As Jesus instructed, pray that God’s will would be done and His kingdom would come on earth (i.e., in government, in your family, workplace, heart, etc.) as it is in heaven.

Day 4: Divine Wisdom

Proverbs

READ PROVERBS 8:22-31; JOHN 1:1-5

*For our benefit God made him to be wisdom itself.
(1 Corinthians 1:30 NLT)*

Proverbs 8 paints a picture of wisdom as a person, even as a divine being. She was there at the beginning, the guiding principle behind creation. She saw it all and structured it all, forming the logic of the universe and the foundation of whatever God does. With echoes of the Holy Spirit hovering over the deep in Genesis, wisdom breathes and imparts life and understanding. Our world and our individual lives are designed to align with the mind of God and the wisdom of all His ways.

The first chapter of John picks up on this Hebrew theme and puts it in Greek terms. In the beginning was the Word—the *logos*, the logic, the guiding principle of creation—and the Word was with God. In fact, the Word was God. What a mystery: this divine Logos—“God,” but also “*with* God.” Theologians have struggled to explain this for thousands of years. But whether or not we understand the relationship between the personified logic or wisdom behind the universe and the God who created that universe through His “Word,” it’s there. Scripture makes it clear that Jesus—the personification of eternal wisdom—was there at the beginning and was thoroughly involved in how things were made. He is the author and beneficiary of its grand design.

What does that mean for us? Well, it means that any time we throw caution to the wind and choose foolishness over wisdom, we’re choosing to step out of alignment with our own purpose and out of sync with the universe. It means that when both wisdom and folly call to us from the streets, as they do in Proverbs (1:20; 8:1-3; 9:13-16), we really shouldn’t have a hard time deciding which voice to follow. One will lead us into life and beauty and meaning, the other into disappointment, frustration, and despair. It won’t look that way on the surface at first; folly is a master of false advertising. But we never lose out by aligning ourselves with the wisdom of God.

Jesus said the same thing, affirming Himself as the embodiment of God’s wisdom. Whoever listened to His words and followed them would be like a builder who built his house on a rock. Whoever didn’t would be like a builder building on the sand. One house survives storms, the other doesn’t (Matthew 7:24-27). Wisdom gives us peace in the present, security for the future, and fellowship with the mind of God forever.

Reflection

- How can we discover God’s wisdom: in His Word? in prayer? in fellowship with others who have His Spirit? in the design of His world?
- Read Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 1:17-21. What is included in the “wisdom and revelation” of this prayer? Where specifically in your life do you need such guidance from above?

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Bottom Line

God founded His world on His own wisdom and Word—and Jesus is the personification of His wisdom and Word.

Pray for a spirit of wisdom and revelation, that God would open the eyes of your heart to see and understand His truth and His purposes.

Day 5: Temple

2 Chronicles 1-7

READ 2 CHRONICLES 5; 7:1-3; ACTS 2:1-4; 1 CORINTHIANS 3:16-17

*We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord.
(Ephesians 2:21 NLT)*

The temple was built according to the same pattern as the tabernacle, but with permanent walls and greater capacity in its courtyards. All the elements were there—the altar, laver, lampstand, bread of the presence, ark of the covenant, etc.—and, as we’ve seen, these articles prefigured Jesus and His Spirit in remarkably specific ways. The temple didn’t represent any change in God’s desire to be with His people; that had always been His plan. It was, however, another step along the journey toward a much more intimate presence.

That journey began back in Eden, which is described with Hebrew words that suggest God meant the garden to be a temple—and for it to expand throughout the world as the first humans fulfilled their calling to tend the garden, fill the earth, and subdue it. But the Fall interrupted that mission, and God’s deeper plan emerged. He would call a specific people and designate a place of presence among them: the tabernacle. The mobile tabernacle was eventually replaced by a permanent temple in Jerusalem, and God filled it with His presence so powerfully that the priests and worshipers at the dedication couldn’t even stand. But that wasn’t the end of the progression. After all, how can God be contained in a building? (1 Kings 8:27). He can’t. He fills the universe with His presence.

Even though He is always with us, He wasn’t always manifestly with us in a way we could experience fellowship with Him. So God clothed Himself in flesh and “tabernacled” among us in Jesus—the living, moving, relational temple of God during His ministry on earth. But one short lifetime was not the extent of God’s presence. By sending His Spirit into Jesus’ followers as they responded to Him in faith after His resurrection, He essentially created millions of “temples” and filled the earth with His glory—just as He had planned in Eden. Those who believe in the Son receive His Spirit and become, both collectively and individually, His dwelling place on earth. We become the body of Christ and the habitation of His Spirit.

Reflection

- When you think about being one of God’s dwelling places on earth, what thoughts come to mind? In what ways is this idea exciting? In what ways is it sobering?
- How do you think the church and individual Christians should live as God’s temple on earth? What should that look like? What can we do to grow into that picture?

Bottom Line

God not only wants to be with us, He wants to live in us and show Himself to others through us.

Pray to grow more fully into your identity as a dwelling place for God on earth—in your own life and as a member of the larger body of Christ.

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Look ahead

The united kingdom era shows us how human kingdoms, even flawed ones, can become a picture of God’s true purposes for His people. But the next era of Israel’s history shows us how human kingdoms can fail—and how God sends messengers to call people back to Himself and foretell the ultimate kingdom to come.

Jesus in the Divided Kingdom

BEGINNINGS

Genesis

WANDERINGS

Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy

PROMISED LAND

Joshua
Judges
Ruth

UNITED KINGDOM

1 & 2 Samuel
1 Kings 1-11
1 Chronicles
2 Chronicles 1-9
Psalms
Proverbs
Ecclesiastes
Song of Songs

DIVIDED KINGDOM

2 Kings 12-25
2 Chronicles 10-36
Isaiah
Jeremiah
Lamentations
Hosea
Joel
Amos
Obadiah
Jonah
Micah
Nahum
Habakkuk
Zephaniah

CAPTIVITY & THE COMING KINGDOM

Ezra
Nehemiah
Esther
Ezekiel
Daniel
Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi

JESUS IN GENESIS

JESUS IN THE
WANDERINGS

JESUS IN THE
PROMISED LAND

JESUS IN THE
UNITED KINGDOM

JESUS IN THE
DIVIDED KINGDOM

JESUS IN THE
CAPTIVITY & THE
COMING KINGDOM



Day 1: Voice in the Wilderness

1 Kings 17–2 Kings 2

READ 1 KINGS 18:16-24; ISAIAH 40:3; MALACHI 4:5-6; LUKE 1:11-17

*"For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come."
(Matthew 11:13-14 NIV)*

Early in each of the gospels, John the baptizer appeared on the scene preaching a very strong message: that the kingdom of God was coming, and every heart should prepare for it. He urged people to "repent"—to turn away from sin and toward God, to change the way they thought, to learn to see in totally new ways. John's ministry had been foretold in Isaiah and Malachi as a voice crying in the wilderness that prepares the way for the coming of the Lord Himself (see Isaiah 40:3). The prophets foretold this one who would announce the kingdom—and the King who would build on that message—centuries before John arrived on the scene.

There was another portrayal of John centuries before he came, not in the specific words of a prophet but in the spirit of one. Elijah came to the northern kingdom of Israel at a time when virtually the entire nation had split its worship among many gods and altars in the land and its ruling king and queen were devout and aggressive worshipers of Baal. Elijah appeared on the scene to remind the people of their covenant with God, declare one of God's consequences for rebellion (drought and famine), and challenge false worshipers to either prove their gods were genuine or turn back to the true and living God. Elijah did remarkable miracles and prayed powerful prayers that authenticated his ministry. His counter-cultural message and lifestyle rubbed many people the wrong way but turned many others back to the right way. He had a ministry of confrontation.

That's the spirit in which John came. Jesus said John fulfilled the prophecies that suggested Elijah would come again. In fact, their ministries were so similar—they preached with the same fervor, and John baptized in the same location where Elijah was taken into heaven—that some people thought John might be the earthly return of Elijah himself. Certainly God spoke through John with the same power, and He used John's ministry to turn many hearts back to Him. When the King arrived, the message of the kingdom had prepared His way. Some hearts had been hardened, but many others were softened and ready to receive Him.

Reflection

- What comes to mind when you think of the word *repentance*? Why do you think many people perceive the word negatively? From God's perspective, what do you think it really means?
- What contrasts do you see between the ministry of John and the ministry of Jesus? With such strong differences, how did one ministry prepare the way for the other?

NOTES/JOURNAL

Bottom Line

Elijah's stern message of repentance in the Old Testament was picked up by John the Baptist in the New Testament—and that paved the way for the coming of the Christ.

Pray for sensitivity to God's truth, even when it confronts your current understanding and turns you in a different direction.

Day 2: Healer

2 Kings 2-9

READ 2 KINGS 4:8-37; LUKE 7:11-16

Since He had healed many, all who had diseases were pressing toward Him to touch Him. (Mark 3:10 HCSB)

Elisha requested a double portion of Elijah’s spirit, and apparently he got it. He ended up doing twice as many recorded miracles as Elijah did. Those miracles included parting the waters of the Jordan, reversing a curse against Jericho, restoring lost property, multiplying oil in a jar, feeding a hundred men with a few loaves, healing leprosy, and restoring a dead son to life. In other words, many of his miracles looked a lot like those of Jesus.

One of his miracles, along with one by Elijah, echoed particularly strongly in the ministry of Jesus. Jesus and His followers encountered a funeral procession one day at the village of Nain. According to custom, they should have stepped aside to allow the mourners to pass, but Jesus stopped the procession and found the grieving mother whose only son had just died. Because she was also a widow, she had just lost her sole means of support, the only man who could provide for her. Jesus had compassion on her and raised her son and “gave him back to his mother” (Luke 7:15)—just as Elijah had done for a widow and as Elisha had done for a woman from Shunem.

Nain, where this miracle occurred, was only a short walk from the village where Elisha restored the Shunamite’s son—a parallel that everyone hearing this story would have noticed. Connections like this in Jesus’ ministry to Old Testament figures authenticate His identity. Such divine fingerprints on the stories tie the testaments together. What God did through Elijah and Elisha was duplicated and expanded on in the ministry of Jesus.

More than that, Jesus’ healings, resurrections, and deliverances demonstrated the compassion of God for people who are hurting. His love compelled Him to heal those who came to Him with diseases and afflictions. He restored withered hands, empowered paralytics to get up and walk, gave sight to the blind, opened deaf ears, cleansed lepers, delivered people of seizures, cured people of fevers and bleeding, and raised the dead at least three times. And, like Elisha, who raised the dead even after his own death (see 2 Kings 13:21), Jesus’ miracles continued long after His death and resurrection. Elisha was a picture of God’s power for the sick; Jesus was the fulfillment of that picture. And His healing power continues in the lives of His people today.

Reflection

- In what ways did Elisha’s ministry differ from Elijah’s? Why do you think both ministry types are necessary to represent God’s purposes?
- What kind of experience have you had, if any, with praying for healing for yourself or someone else? Do you know anyone who has received healing in response to prayer? If so, what impact did that have on your faith?

NOTES/JOURNAL

Bottom Line

Jesus heals, both to authenticate His claims to be the Christ, the Son of God, and to express His compassion for those in need.

Pray for God’s healing power in your life and in the lives of those who are sick.

Day 3: Coming Savior

Isaiah 61:1-3; Jeremiah 23:5-6

READ ISAIAH 49:6; 61:1-3; ACTS 4:12

"Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord." (Luke 2:11 NIV)

At one point early in His ministry, Jesus visited His hometown of Nazareth and was invited to do the regular reading of the Torah scroll during the Sabbath synagogue service. Whether a passage from Isaiah 61 was already designated for that day or He chose the passage Himself, it clearly was a message from God about His ministry. This prophecy, familiar to all Jews as an expression of their messianic hopes, essentially formed Jesus' ministry manifesto. He had come to proclaim good news for the poor, freedom for captives, sight for the blind, deliverance for the oppressed, and a time of God's favor for all. In other words, He had come to save.

Jesus said Isaiah's words were being fulfilled in His ministry, and His hearers would have understood that statement as a claim to be the Messiah. They became upset when He also applied His mission to Gentiles, but they liked the idea of a hometown hero being a Savior. They had longed for the Messiah; Jesus, with His powerful teaching and miracles, seemed to fit the role. Perhaps the Savior had actually come.

But what kind of salvation did Jesus bring? Today, we generally interpret salvation as an entirely spiritual blessing. And it is spiritual, to be sure. But Old Testament experience put salvation in very real terms—deliverance from slavery, justice for the oppressed, food for the hungry, and more. Jesus declared a very practical side of salvation too—freedom, sight, deliverance from poverty—as part of the essence of His mission. And His ministry continued to demonstrate God's concern for every area of life.

The biblical word for "save"—*sozo* in the New Testament—is comprehensive. It's more than just spiritual; a Philippian jailer used it when he was worried about being executed by Roman authorities for failing his job (Acts 16:30). It involves circumstances, physical needs, mental and emotional well-being, and more. And it's ongoing. According to the New Testament, we have been saved (Ephesians 2:5, 8), are being saved (1 Corinthians 1:18; 15:1-2), and will be saved (Romans 5:9-10; 1 Peter 1:5). All of Scripture points to a Savior who restores every aspect of life and brings wholeness to our entire being. And in the fullness of His kingdom, we will experience His salvation in every possible way.

Reflection

- In what ways has God already saved you? In what ways do you still need to experience God's power to deliver?
- What does it mean to be a messenger of the salvation Jesus offers? If salvation is comprehensive, what kinds of ministries can we do to help invite others into it?

NOTES/JOURNAL

Bottom Line

The prophets foretold a thorough, comprehensive salvation, and Jesus came as Savior to bring salvation to every area of our lives.

Pray that you might come to appreciate God's salvation in a deeper way, and that you might see new, out-of-the-box ways to help others experience His grace.

Day 4: Suffering Servant

Isaiah 42-53

READ ISAIAH 53; LUKE 18:31-34

He personally carried our sins in his body on the cross so that we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. (1 Peter 2:24 NLT)

More than 700 years before Jesus, Isaiah prophesied a servant of God who would suffer. In places in Scripture, the servant is identified specifically as Israel (49:3), yet the servant is also sent to Israel as God's messenger (49:5-6). He is the chosen one who brings justice, a light for the Gentiles, accused and abused, despised and rejected, a lamb led to slaughter, and an offering for sin. In fact, the descriptions of the servant in Isaiah so closely align with the ministry of Jesus that it's hard not to see Him in them. He lived them out in great detail.

That's also true for Psalm 22, which depicts both the brutal mistreatment of someone who trusts in the Lord and nations turning to God in the aftermath. Jesus quoted the first verse of this psalm from the cross—"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (see also Matthew 27:46)—implying the message of the entire passage. He came to reign, of course, as many other messianic prophecies assure us. But before He reigns, He came to suffer. The testimony of Hebrew Scripture is clear. God enters into suffering in order to save us from it. He stepped into our broken world in order to repair it. He redeems us by becoming one of us and paying the penalty we deserved for our rebellion. He accomplished salvation by taking our place.

We saw this dual picture of the Messiah earlier—the Messiah Son of Joseph and the Messiah Son of David, the sufferer and the victor. And we need both. Without the suffering of the Servant, we would not have a High Priest who sympathizes with our weaknesses (Hebrews 4:15), someone we could relate to and who actually shows us the way to live as a human being. But without the victorious King, we would remain in our suffering and have no hope of overcoming. The cross and resurrection were God's unfathomable way of meeting both of these needs—of suffering the consequences of our sin on our behalf, and of bringing us into new life and restoring His image within us. Because of His suffering, we can be made whole. Or, as Isaiah expressed it, by His stripes we are healed. Because Jesus took our sin and gave us His righteousness, we are delivered from the suffering and brokenness of a fallen world. And we are further able to step into an entirely new life and become everything God intends for us to be.

Reflection

- How is it possible for us to find healing through Jesus' suffering? Why was it necessary for Him to enter into our condition and experience pain and grief on our behalf? How does His ministry of suffering strengthen you or give you hope?
- How do you relate to God when you are in pain? What do you say to Him? What promises does He give you about what you're going through?

NOTES/JOURNAL

Bottom Line

God did not save us by promising we could avoid suffering but by entering into it and overcoming sin and suffering on our behalf.

Pray for a deeper appreciation of Jesus' suffering on our behalf and thank Him that even though we will have trouble in the world, He has overcome the world (John 16:33).

Day 5: Coming King

Psalm 2; Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:1-10

READ PSALM 2:6-8; ISAIAH 9:6-7

On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. (Revelation 19:16 NIV)

Though the prophets during the divided kingdom foretold a servant of God who would suffer on behalf of His people, they also foretold a King who would come to reign. This was good news for everyone who lamented the lost days of David and Solomon. The glory of their kingdoms was a distant memory after the nation divided and few kings remained truly faithful to God. The split nation was thrown into turmoil, with seasons of drought and famine, and periods of oppression and war. God had promised long ago that they would receive many blessings for remaining faithful to Him, including victory, peace, and abundance. They would be the head and not the tail (Deuteronomy 28:13). But they experienced many years of being the tail. They longed for a victorious King to lead them.

That's what God promised through prophets like Isaiah. Even psalms written during David's own time pointed ahead to a greater King who would come. This King would carry with Him every blessing God had promised to His people. He would usher in a time of peace and prosperity, make the land fruitful and full, and cultivate an environment of joy and gratitude. Enemies would fall away, poverty would be eliminated, and injustice would be purged. Everything would be as God intended.

Even the people of Israel and Judah who recalled stories of David's and Solomon's kingdoms knew those dreams had never been fully realized, and so do we. Kingdoms have come and gone, and many of them have been good. But none have been *that* good. We temper our dreams of utopia and would settle for a pretty good society. We know better than to get our hopes up in this age. And not many people are expectantly looking for another age to come.

But the people of God are. The Hebrew prophecies of a coming King are echoed again in Jesus' ministry. He even promised before He returned to heaven that His work wasn't finished yet. He came to announce the kingdom and demonstrate it. He even launched it among His followers. But He hasn't yet come to fulfill it. That promise is held until an unspecified time, and all we know to do is watch for it and prepare.

Reflection

- Do you find it easy or difficult to envision Jesus as a conquering King? Why?
- What kind of kingdom do you think Jesus will establish? What will its culture be like? What kind of leaders do you think He will choose to rule with Him?

Bottom Line

When Jesus comes again, it will be to rule and reign as King forever.

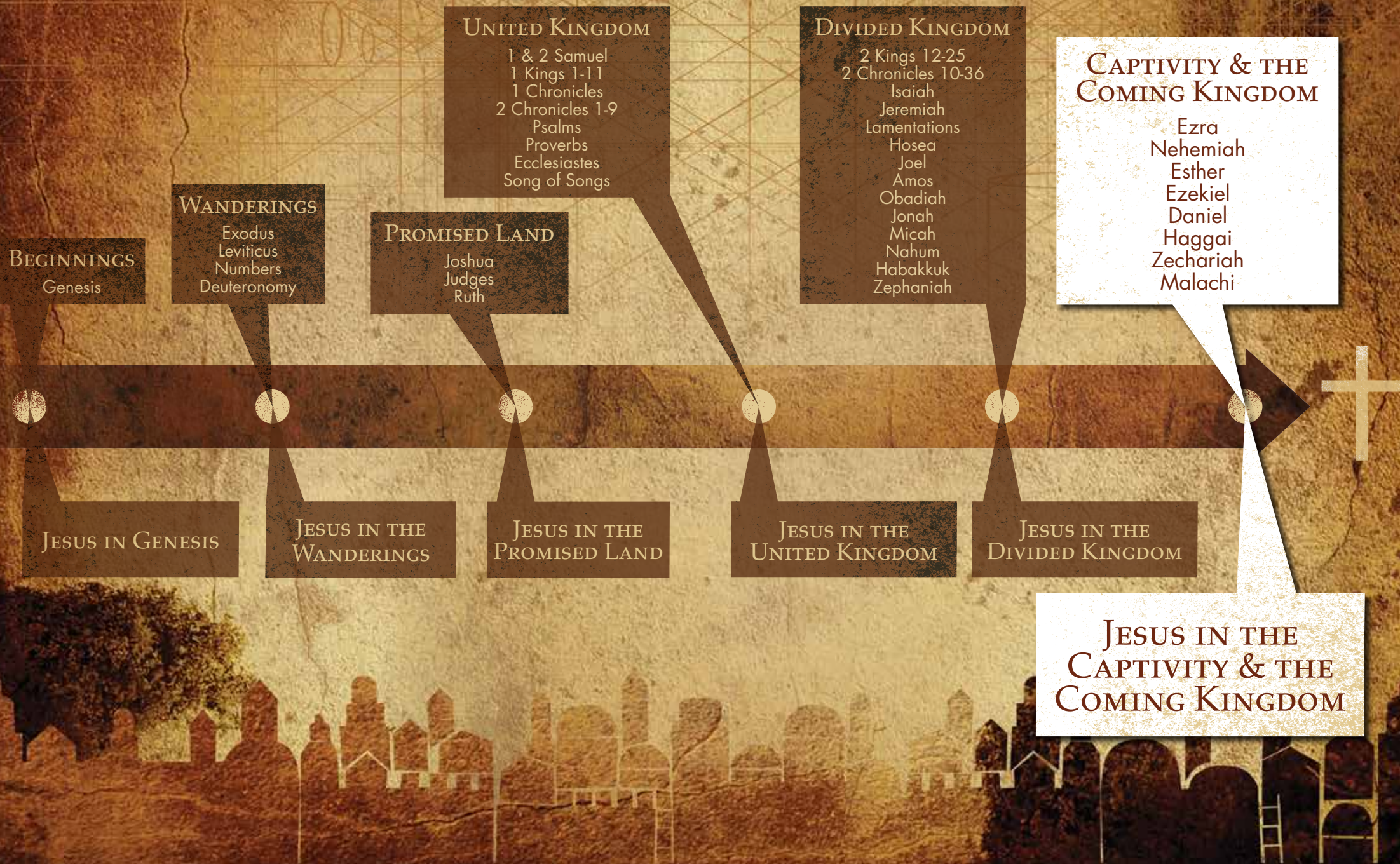
Pray for God's kingdom to grow even now and for His people to represent His kingdom well until it comes in its fullness.

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Look ahead

After many years of turning away from God, with only a few years of repentance and faithfulness mixed in, Israel and Judah will experience their worst imaginable crisis: overthrow and captivity. But no crisis is bigger than God, and He will lead them back with promises of rebuilding, restoration, and even greater visions of hope.

Jesus in the Captivity & the Coming Kingdom



Day 1: Son of Man

Daniel

READ DANIEL 7:9-14; MARK 14:60-65

"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory." (Matthew 25:31 HCSB)

Daniel had a vision in Babylon of beasts that represented empires and exalted themselves against God. But he also saw a vision of God—the Ancient of Days seated on His throne, a Judge high above all human decisions, surrounded by multitudes of loyal and worshipful servants. While this drama of shifting empires under a sovereign God played out, Daniel saw something else that astounded him: a human-like figure coming with the clouds of heaven and approaching the Ancient of Days. He was given authority, glory, and power—and an everlasting kingdom that would never pass away or be destroyed. And all nations worshiped Him.

It's impossible to overstate the impact this vision would have had on a faithful Jew like Daniel. A Son of Man being worshiped like a God? With the Almighty watching from His throne and allowing it? There's only one God; everyone knows that. Only He is worthy of worship, and only He is sovereign over nations and King of a never-ending kingdom. So who was this Son of Man? And why was the Ancient of Days sharing His authority, glory, and power with Him?

Centuries later, Jesus applied this term to Himself. In fact, it was His favorite name whenever He referred to Himself in third-person. In calling Himself "Son of Man," Jesus was not only referring to His humanity; He was referring to Himself as the figure in Daniel's vision who was given God's authority, glory, and power, who was worshiped by multitudes from all nations, and who was given an everlasting kingdom. It was a strong enough term to earn charges of blasphemy and seal His execution at His trial. While "son of God" was often used of angelic messengers, "Son of Man" was not. This was a surprising, divine-human character in a very famous prophecy. And Jesus claimed to be that character.

Many people suggest that Jesus never overtly claimed to be God. Perhaps not, at least not with those explicit words. But He claimed divinity in so many other ways, and this is one of them. He allowed people to worship Him during His earthly ministry, and He referred to Himself as the one who can approach God's throne to receive glory, honor, power, and worship. That makes Him either a heinous liar or a divine being, and He certainly doesn't fit the profile of a heinous liar. He is both Son of God and Son of Man.

Reflection

- Why would it be impossible to believe the gospel accounts of Jesus and claim that He was just a good teacher? Why is it vital for us to believe He is more than that?
- How does knowing Jesus' true identity help you when you are in a crisis—or when, like Daniel, you envision disturbing things about the future?

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Bottom Line

Jesus is fully God and fully man, He is sovereign over history and the future, and He is worthy of worship.

Pray a prayer of worship, honoring Jesus for who He is and thanking Him for His sovereignty over your life.

Day 2: New Heart

Ezekiel

READ EZEKIEL 11:17-20; 36:24-28; JOHN 14:15-21

*Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. . . . Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.
(Galatians 5:16, 25 NIV)*

Centuries of God leading His people and their attempts at obeying Him had not produced a satisfying covenant relationship. He had promised them extravagant blessings for their faithfulness, and they were not able to give it, at least not consistently. Over time, many of them turned completely away, worshiping idols and ignoring His Word. Those who did seek to obey Him did so imperfectly and from a sense of self-righteousness. The hearts of the nation—all of them—were hard and incapable.

That's the human condition, no matter how hard we try to follow God. We can't measure up because our hearts are fickle, our commitments fleeting. All our efforts fall short. In ancient Israel and Judah, they fell so short that God had to wake them up. He disciplined them by letting them be conquered and carried away. In the midst of that trauma, both Jeremiah and Ezekiel prophesied that God would one day give His people a new heart. He would write His laws within them rather than having His people continue to obey external rules and principles and constantly fall short. He would change their inner nature to be consistent with His own. The transformation would be total, and would begin from the inside out.

That promise was not fulfilled immediately after the captivity. It would be hundreds of years later, when Jesus came, that the promise of a new heart began to be fulfilled. He told His followers the Spirit who had been with them would now be in them (John 14:17). He temporarily breathed His Spirit into them (John 20:22). Then the Holy Spirit fell on them in power on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Whenever they relied on His power and let His life flow through them, they became like Him. The image that was shattered in Eden began to be restored as the Spirit changed believers into the image of God's Son. The new heart became a reality.

It isn't always a perfect reality in our lives. We haven't been made infallible. We don't always rely on the power of the Spirit or let Him live His life through us. We often walk our own way. But when we surrender our lives to the control of the Spirit and walk in His power, things happen. He moves. Hard hearts soften. Cold hearts warm. And the image of God is reflected in our lives in ways our old, unredeemed hearts could hardly have envisioned.

Reflection

- In what ways have you experienced the new heart of God's promise? In what areas of your heart does that promise remain unfulfilled?
- Why do you think many Christians experience radical transformation and others seem to change very little? What can we do to be more fully transformed?

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Bottom Line

Jesus did not come to make us better people. He came to make us new people and to restore us to the image of God.

Pray for continual growth in the Spirit and the fullness of the new heart God promised.

Day 3: Branch and Signet Ring

Haggai; Zechariah

READ HAGGAI 2; ZECHARIAH 3

“Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.” (Luke 2:11 NIV)

A signet ring was often used by a king to validate his orders or messages and signify that they had come directly from him. It was a sign of authenticity carrying the full weight of the king's authority. So when, through the prophet Haggai, God called Zerubbabel to be a signet ring for Him, it was a serious calling (Haggai 2:23). Zerubbabel, the governor of exiles who had returned to Jerusalem, was being given the authority of God to make decrees and enforce His instructions.

Years earlier, Isaiah had prophesied of a branch growing out of the stump of Jesse—i.e., David's line of descendants (Isaiah 11:1). Jeremiah 23:5 said essentially the same thing, though without the symbolism of a branch. So when, through the prophet Zechariah, God told Joshua the high priest and his fellow priests who had returned to Jerusalem that the Branch was soon coming (Zechariah 3:8-10), they would have understood Him to mean that the Messiah was on His way. The message was that this wave of exiles back from captivity were the beginning of something momentous in God's plans. He was bringing forth His purposes.

Why did God speak with such messianic connotations if the coming of the Messiah was still five centuries away? Because with God, prophetic declarations don't always mean His plan is about to happen. They mean His plan is coming near—in proximity, if not in time. He is announcing it, bringing it into a new phase, unfolding parts of it before their eyes, allowing them to brush up against it and see its implications up close. These prophetic glimpses in Haggai and Zechariah, as well as the other prophets of the exile and post-exile periods, were really just whispers, hints of what was to come. But they were exciting whispers. They drew from current characters and projected them onto a larger stage, using them as pictures and foreshadows of the future. God chose to use these leaders as representatives of hope and point to a much greater hope down the road. They were like earnest money on the contract God had with His people.

We can understand that; the New Testament uses the same image about the Spirit (2 Corinthians 1:22). When God makes a covenant, He signs it with His own name. It's guaranteed. In leading the restoration under God's authority, Joshua and Zerubbabel were like God's signature on a greater restoration. And in the fullness of time, He sent His own Son as the Signet and the Branch He had promised.

Reflection

- In what ways might God whisper His calling and future purposes into your life? How do you think He would respond if you asked Him to do that?
- How long are you willing to wait for God's promises to unfold in your life? Why is it important to be patient with His plans for you?

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Bottom Line

God is faithful to whisper hope and encouragement to His people as they wait on Him to make good on His promises.

Pray Whenever you get discouraged, ask God for signs of hope. Ask Him to open your ears to His whispers of encouragement.

Day 4: The One Who Was Pierced

Zechariah

READ ZECHARIAH 9:9; 12:10; 13:7; REVELATION 1:7

"They will look on me whom they have pierced and mourn for him as for an only son." (Zechariah 12:10 NLT)

Zechariah is an obscure book of prophecies in the minds of many Christians, but all readers of the New Testament have been exposed to its predictions. That's because many of the prophet's words pointed to the Messiah and helped early Christians understand the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. The New Testament writers quoted his verses about the humble King who comes riding in on a donkey, about Jesus being sold for 30 pieces of silver, and about how the sheep scatter when the shepherd is stricken. And they learned that the Jewish people, who were rejecting their Messiah in the years after His resurrection, would eventually recognize the One they had pierced, grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn son, and turn to Him in repentance and faith.

This was a sustaining hope for first-century Jewish believers. The fact that Jesus' own people could reject Him was a shocking idea, and many Jewish Christians wondered how their kinsmen fit into God's plan. Prophecies like Zechariah's—quoted extensively in Revelation and the gospels—were deeply encouraging and made sense of the response of the majority of Jews. It wasn't that God had left them out of His plan; it was that in rejecting the Messiah, they had withdrawn themselves from it for a time, but would be restored one day. Their eyes would eventually be opened to the truth of who Jesus is.

Who but God would ever come up with a plan to suffer the penalty for the world's sin by subjecting Himself to the worst sin—the greatest injustice—ever committed. The holes in Jesus' hands, feet, and side remain as an eternal testimony to the compassion of God and His sacrifice on our behalf. By those wounds, He bled the blood that cleanses us of sin and restores us to God. Both Jews and Gentiles had conspired to execute the only innocent man ever to live, and His wounds have become a source both of profound grief and everlasting gratitude. According to Zechariah and Revelation, His wounds will be visible when He comes again, and those who pierced Him will recognize the truth. They will bow and worship and know Him as their own.

Reflection

- Many of Zechariah's prophecies of the Messiah are found in scattered and obscure phrases that did not make sense until after Jesus' crucifixion. Why do you think God did not inspire a fuller, more detailed picture ahead of time? How did those prophecies testify to Jesus afterward?
- How would you react if you discovered you had been part of putting God's Son to death? In what ways would you relate to Him in the aftermath? How does this picture describe the feelings of many first-century Jewish believers?

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Bottom Line

The eternal Son of God kept His wounds even after the resurrection as an eternal symbol of God's mercy.

Pray for a deeper appreciation and a clearer vision of what Jesus' sacrifice accomplished for you. Ask God to open many eyes to the truth of who He is.

Day 5: Messenger of the Covenant

Malachi

READ MALACHI 3:1-4; 4:5-6

*"The Lord you are seeking will suddenly come to his Temple."
(Malachi 3:1 NLT)*

In the days of Malachi, many of God's people had taken His covenant lightly or even rejected it. They wondered where the God of justice had gone and why He seemed so distant. In fact, the prophet says they had wearied God by asking where He was (2:17). So Malachi prophesied that a messenger was coming to prepare the way of the Lord—generally mentioned in 3:1, but identified as an Elijah-like figure in 4:5-6—and that the Lord Himself would suddenly come to His temple. The God they were looking for would appear.

Malachi presented this as important news but not necessarily as good news for his hearers. He essentially declared, "You want to know where the God of the covenant is? I'll tell you where He is. He's coming into His temple, and He will catch you off guard. And He won't be coming to affirm everything you're doing. No, He will purify your corrupt priesthood and cleanse those of you who have turned away from Him and dirtied yourselves. Like a refiner's fire and a launderer's soap, He will wash the filth off of you."

John the Baptist fulfilled the role of the one who prepares the way; numerous New Testament passages say so, including many spoken by Jesus Himself. But the messenger of the covenant is Jesus—the Lord whom they sought. He suddenly came to His temple, figuratively and literally, and He came with a passion to cleanse.

That ought to tell us something about the Messiah's purpose in our lives. He loves us and accepts us as we are, but He loves us too much to leave us where we are. He's not interested in seeing us conform externally to some kind of religious code. He wants us to have hearts of integrity, filled with a passionate desire to love and serve Him. He wants to cleanse us of double-mindedness, deception, injustice, and selfishness. He wants to birth in us attitudes and characteristics that reflect His nature. He wants to live in intimate relationship with us. Why? Because that's why we were created—for fellowship with Him. We were made for relationship with the living God. Sin and corruption prevent that. So our gracious Lord, when He suddenly comes to His temple, comes to purify us. He wants us.

Reflection

- What heart attitudes get in the way of your relationship with God? How do you think God would respond if you submitted them to Him and asked for cleansing?
- In what ways do you think religions tend to distort the idea of purity? What do you think it really means?

Bottom Line

Jesus is zealous for a genuine relationship with His people and comes to prepare a way into our hearts.

Pray for a deeper, more fulfilling relationship with Jesus today . . . and every day.

NOTES/JOURNAL

Look ahead

Captivity and initial hopelessness gave way to another message from God—this time not about judgment but about restoration. The prophets during and after the exile saw good things ahead, and they were even greater than the people imagined.



RESOURCES

If you want a closer walk with God through His Word, these resources are a great place to start!

Thank you for joining us for the *Jesus in the Old Testament Bible study*.

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Walk Thru the Bible is known for innovative methods and high-quality biblical resources. We serve the whole body of Christ across denominational, cultural, and national lines. We partner with the local church worldwide to fulfill its mission, communicating the truths of God's Word in a way that makes the Bible readily accessible to anyone. Through our strong global network, we are strategically positioned to address the church's greatest need: developing mature, committed, and spiritually reproducing believers.

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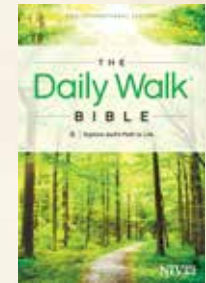
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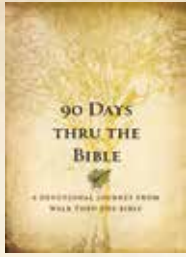
"Creation! Fall! Flood! Nations! ..."
Our Old Testament flashcards will help you remember the storyline and hand motions from the *otLIVE* event.



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[OT & NT]

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Daily Walk

Daily Walk is designed to guide you through your daily reading of the Scripture, taking you from Genesis to Revelation in the span of a year. With application and insight for each daily reading, this is the Bible reading plan that will get you through Leviticus! Includes a downloadable small group guide.



Closer Walk

Closer Walk is a bimonthly devotional magazine that is designed to help you read through the entire New Testament in a year. At an easy, manageable pace, you’ll go deep with the help of timeless devotional messages from such esteemed theologians as Charles Spurgeon, C.S. Lewis, John Wesley, Matthew Henry, Oswald Chambers, and so many more.



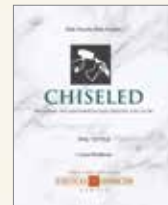
indeed

Award-winning *indeed* magazine is a bi-monthly devotional that helps you explore the heart of God and is designed to illuminate themes in Scripture. Each week focuses on a new theme with daily readings to deepen your understanding of Scripture as well as God’s heart. Insightful articles punctuate the themes with application and testimonies of how God works through His Word. Includes a downloadable small group guide.

RESOURCES

These resources will take you on a deeper walk with God!

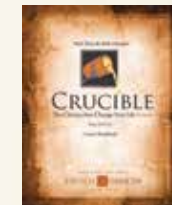
WALK THRU THE BIBLE® BIBLICAL CHARACTER SERIES



Chiseled
(the life of Peter)



Chosen
(the life of Mary)



Crucible
(the life of David)



Detour
(the life of Joseph)



Revolution
(the life of Josiah)





A small group study that delves into God's story and His work to redeem, restore, and renew His people. Dives deep into the big picture of the Old Testament (or the New Testament), giving greater understanding, points of application, what it all means, and why it's important to your life.

God's Grand Story Series

[the Bible study series]



Jesus in the Old Testament

This Bible study shows us how Jesus can be seen all throughout the Old Testament—in the creation story and God's intent for mankind; the promise of God to Abraham to create a great nation; and the periods of slavery, wanderings, the promised land, and more.



Old Testament in the New Testament

Just as the coming of the Messiah was a fulfillment of numerous ancient prophecies from Hebrew Scripture, so was His life and ministry. Jesus pointed to ancient prophecies in the Old Testament that referred to Him, and He demonstrated how He fulfilled them in the New.

Story Thru the Bible/Old Testament or New Testament

The Bible is a collection of stories of real-life experiences of people who heard His voice, encountered His presence, or experienced His works. Each volume contains 26 stories from Scripture.



WALK THRU THE BIBLE LANDS

Walk Thru the Bible leads tours to the Bible Lands where you can see first-hand where the stories you know and love actually happened! This is a distinctively Walk Thru the Bible experience, led by a WTB instructor and guide. Walk where Jesus walked and experience the story in a new way. You'll never read your Bible the same way again! Find out more, including how surprisingly affordable it is to **Walk Thru the Bible Lands**. Join us on one of our upcoming tours! walkthruthebiblelands.org

For information about any of these resources, visit walkthru.org/shop



A resource from the God's **Grand** Story Series

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

a group or individual Bible study

